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Intelligence Appraisal China: Nuclear Missile Strategy (U)

13 MARCH 1981

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Intelligence Appraisal

CHINA:

NUCLEAR MISSILE STRATEGY (U)

PREPARED BY



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CHINA: NUCLEAR MISSILE STRATEGY (U)

Summary

(S//WNINTEL//NOFORN)



Discussion

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Chinese Statements

(S//WNINTEL//NOFORN)

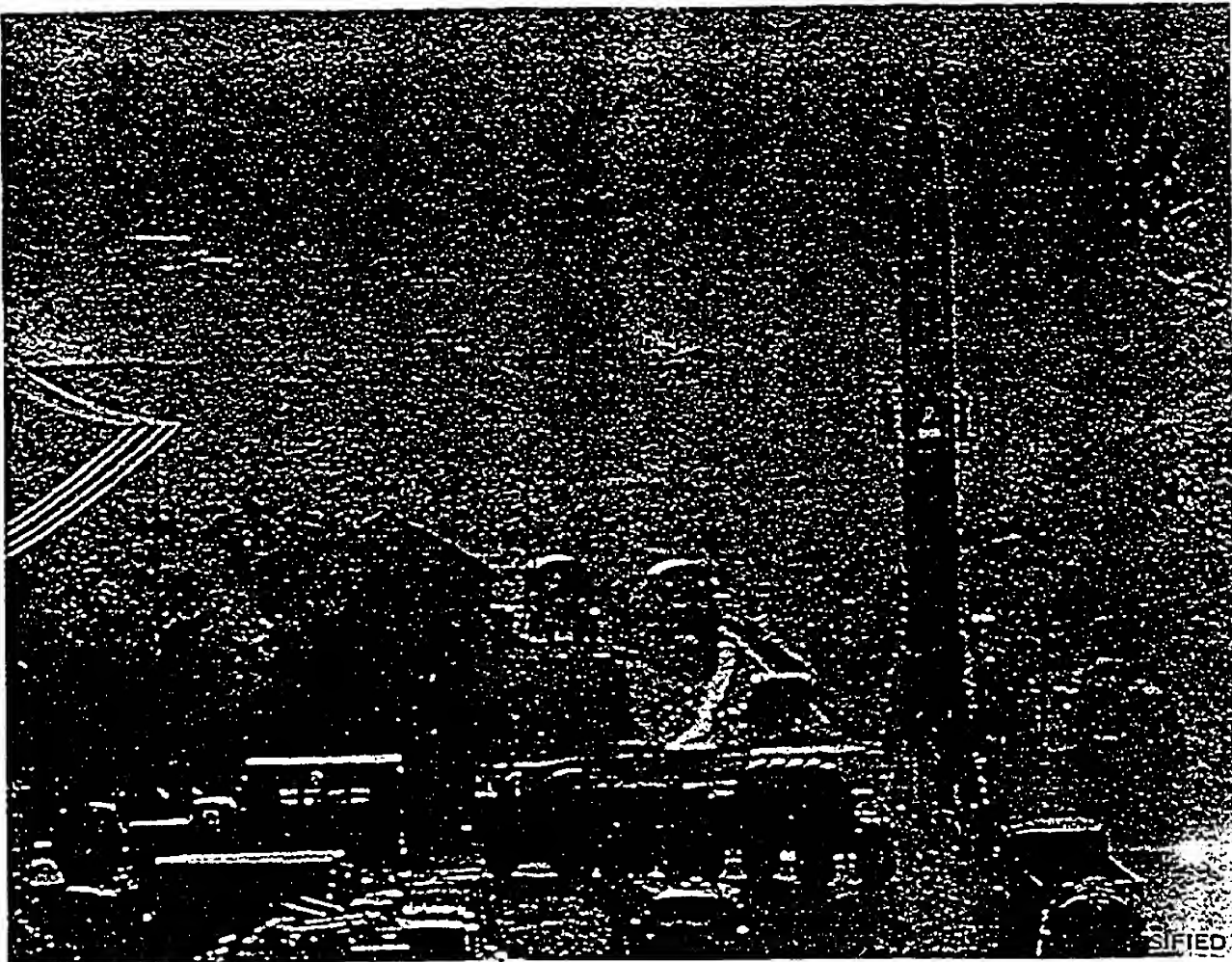


(U) Until quite recently, the leaders of the People's Republic of China publicly denigrated the effectiveness of nuclear weapons. Furthermore, government spokesmen have consistently said that China would never initiate the use of

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CHINESE SSM UNIT IN TRAINING



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nuclear weapons in any conflict. There has been a change, however, in the way the Chinese publicly treat the role of nuclear weapons in modern warfare. The great effort and investment they have made to acquire nuclear weapons is, in itself, an admission of their potential efficacy. In fact, statements on war in general have evolved from Mao's vision of a people's war to what, after the Cultural Revolution, came to be called "people's war under modern conditions." In May 1977 a writer in the newspaper People's Daily said, "We now have some atom bombs in our possession and have thus increased our national defense potential. But we don't blindly believe in atom bombs: we remain firmly convinced that weapons are an important factor in war but not the decisive factor."

(U) On 3 June 1980, Vice Premier Deng Xiaoping told a group of foreign delegates to the Beijing International Institute of Strategic Studies that his country was threatened only by the USSR, that China's nuclear force could survive a Soviet nuclear first strike and retaliate, and that Beijing would not be blackmailed by Moscow. Deng implied China did not need nuclear weapons to deal with a conventional Soviet attack. He said that in any attempt to subdue and occupy large sections of China, the Soviets would have to commit at least three million men at prohibitive cost. He said a Soviet hit-and-run attack on key industrial or military targets would start a long war (10 years) in which China would respond (with conventional forces) at times and in places of its own choosing. Although Deng did not explicitly say so, his comments suggest the Chinese believe the Soviets would be reluctant to commit themselves to a first use of tactical nuclear weapons in such a situation for fear of incurring a strategic nuclear response.

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Force Survivability

(U) A 1978 fictional article described the means by which the missile force could survive an enemy attack and carry out its mission. In the article, "Mobile Warfare with Guided Missiles," which appeared in Liberation Army Literature and Art, a Chinese SSM unit went into the field just before its home garrison was destroyed by an enemy nuclear strike. The unit hid in a rural village, using camouflage and deception in order to avoid detection by enemy satellites; it then fired one missile and quickly moved to another remote site to fire a second. A news story in Liberation Army Daily on 16 September 1979 described the work of a missile unit commander whose unit traveled several thousand kilometers by rail and road, set up its equipment at a remote site, and then carried out "successive mobile launching in a very short time."

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(U) Chinese leaders have often expressed the belief that a war with the Soviet Union will come only after a period of increasing tension, and that their forces (especially their mobile SSM force) will be warned and have time to deploy to remote field sites before an attack. However, steps have been taken to prevent mobile SSM units from being destroyed in garrison by a surprise strike. Mao's famous dictum, "dig tunnels deep; store grain everywhere," has its application in the missile force.

(U) In 1979, articles and photographs in Liberation Army Daily and Liberation Army Pictorial described the work of a member of a missile unit dedicated to tunnel maintenance work. The soldier described was a specialist in the design of moisture control and monitoring equipment. He was being singled out for his work in the development of a machine that could remotely monitor the humidity in what was described as a very extensive system of tunnels.

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